

2. What personal and/or political experience has most shaped your view on race relations; and what can be done to improve race relations?

Answer: Beyond all else, our country is a set of convictions: We hold these truths to be self evident that all men are created equal; that they are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights; that among these are life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness.

Our whole history can be seen first as an effort to preserve these rights, and then as an effort to make them real in the lives of all our citizens. We know that from the beginning, there was a great gap between the plain meaning of our creed and the meaner reality of our daily lives. Back then, only white male property owners could vote. Black slaves were not even counted as whole people, and Native Americans were regarded as little more than an obstacle to our great national progress. No wonder Thomas Jefferson, reflecting on slavery, said he trembled to think God is just.

On the 200th anniversary of our great Constitution, Justice Thurgood Marshall, the grandson of a slave, said, "The government our founders devised was defective from the start, requiring several amendments, a civil war, and momentous social transformation to attain the system of constitutional government and its respect for the individual freedoms and human rights we all hold as fundamental today."

Emancipation, women's suffrage, civil rights, voting rights, equal rights, the struggle for the rights of the disabled -- all these and other struggles are milestones on America's often rocky, but fundamentally righteous journey to close the gap between our ideals and the reality of our daily lives.

I first came to Washington when I was a 16-year-old delegate to the American Legion Boys Nation. Now, that summer was a high-water mark for our national journey. That was the summer that President Kennedy ordered Alabama National Guardsmen to enforce a court order to allow two young blacks to enter the University of Alabama. As he told our nation, "Every American ought to have the right to be treated as he would wish to be treated; as one would wish his children to be treated."

Later that same summer, on the steps of the Lincoln Memorial, Martin Luther King told Americans of his dream that one day the sons of former slaves and the sons of former slaveowners would sit down together at the table of brotherhood; that one day his four little children would be judged not by the color of their skin, but by the content of their character. His words captured the hearts and steeled the wills of millions of Americans. Some of them sang with him in the hot sun that day. Millions more like me listened and wept in the privacy of their homes.

It's hard to believe where we were just three decades ago. When I came up here to Boy's Nation and we had this mock congressional session I was one of only three or four southerners who would even vote for the civil rights plank. That's largely because of my family. My grandfather had a grade school education and ran a grocery store across the street from the

cemetery in Hope, Arkansas, where my parents and my grandparents are buried. Most of his customers were black, were poor, and were working people. As a child in that store I saw that people of different races could treat each other with respect and dignity.

But I also saw that the black neighborhood across the street was the only one in town where the streets weren't paved. And when I returned to that neighborhood in the late 60's to see a woman who had cared for me as a toddler, the streets still weren't paved. A lot of you know that I am an ardent movie-goer. As a child I never went to a movie where I could sit next to a black American. They were always sitting upstairs.

In the 1960's, believe it or not, there were still a few courthouse squares in my state where the rest rooms were marked "white" and "colored." I graduated from a segregated high school seven years after President Eisenhower integrated Little Rock Central High School. And when President Kennedy barely carried my home state in 1960, the poll tax system was still alive and well there.

Even though my grandparents were in a minority, being poor, Southern whites who were pro-civil rights, I think most other people knew better than to think the way they did. Those who were smart enough to act differently, discovered a lesson that we ought to remember today: Discrimination is not just morally wrong, it hurts everybody.

The lesson we learned was a hard one. When we allow people to pit us against one another or spend energy denying opportunity based on our differences, everyone is held back. But when we give all Americans a chance to develop and use their talents, to be full partners in our common enterprise, then everybody is pushed forward.

My experiences with discrimination are rooted in the South and in the legacy slavery left. I also lived with a working mother, and working grandmother when women's work was far rarer and far more circumscribed than it is today. But we all know there are millions of other stories -- those of Hispanics, Asian Americans, Native Americans, people with disabilities, others against whom fingers have been pointed. Many of you have your own stories, and that's why you're here today -- people who were denied the right to develop and use their full human potential. And their progress, too, is a part of our journey to make the reality of America consistent with our principles.

Thirty years ago in Washington, you didn't see many people of color or women making their way to work in the morning in business clothes, or serving in substantial numbers in powerful positions in Congress or at the White House, or making executive decisions every day in businesses. In fact, even the employment want ads were divided, men on one side and women on the other.

It was extraordinary then to see women or people of color as television news anchors, or, believe it or not, even in college sports. There were far fewer women in minorities as job supervisors, or firefighters, or police officers, or doctors, or lawyers, or college professors, or in many other jobs that offer stability and honor and integrity to family life.

A lot has changed, and it did not happen as some sort of random evolutionary drift. It took hard work and sacrifices and countless acts of courage and conscience by millions of Americans. It took the political courage and statesmanship of Democrats and Republicans alike, the vigilance and compassion of courts and advocates in and out of government committed to the Constitution and to equal protection and to equal opportunity. It took the leadership of people in business who knew that in the end we would all be better. It took the leadership of people in labor unions who knew that working people had to be reconciled.

Some people put their lives on the line. Other people lost their lives. And millions of Americans changed their own lives and put hate behind them. As a result, today all our lives are better. Women have become a major force in business and political life, and far more able to contribute to their families incomes. A true and growing black middle class has emerged. Higher education has literally been revolutionized, with women and racial and ethnic minorities attending once overwhelmingly white and sometimes all male schools.

In communities across our nation police departments now better reflect the make-up of those whom they protect. A generation of professionals now serve as role models for young women and minority youth. Hispanics and newer immigrant populations are succeeding in making America stronger.

How did this happen? Fundamentally, because we opened our hearts and minds and changed our ways. But not without pressure -- the pressure of court decisions, legislation, executive action, and the power of examples in the public and private sector. Along the way we learned that laws alone do not change society; that old habits and thinking patterns are deeply ingrained and die hard; that more is required to really open the doors of opportunity. INSERT TO COME

When I was Attorney General of my home state, I hired a record number of women and African American lawyers -- every one clearly qualified and exceptionally hardworking. As Governor, I appointed more women to my Cabinet and state boards than any other governor in the state's history, and more African Americans than all the governors in the state's history combined. And no one ever questioned their qualifications or performance. And our state was better and stronger because of their service.

As President, I am proud to have the most diverse administration in history in my Cabinet, my agencies and my staff. And I must say, I have been surprised at the criticism I have received from some quarters in my determination to achieve this.

In the last two and a half years, the most outstanding example of affirmative action in the United States, the Pentagon, has opened 260,000 positions for women who serve in our Armed Forces. I have appointed more women and minorities to the federal bench than any other president, more than the last two combined. And yet, far more of our judicial appointments have

received the highest rating from the American Bar Association than any other administration since those ratings have been given.

In our administration many government agencies are doing more business with qualified firms run by minorities and women. The Small Business Administration has reduced its budget by 40 percent, doubled its loan outputs, dramatically increased the number of loans to women and minority small business people, without reducing the number of loans to white businessowners who happen to be male, and without changing the loan standards for a single, solitary application. Quality and diversity can go hand in hand, and they must.

I ask all Americans, to see this issue of race and opportunity in the larger context of our times. President Lincoln said, we cannot escape our history. We cannot escape our future, either. And that future must be one in which every American has the chance to live up to his or her God-given capacities.

The new technology, the instant communications, the explosion of global commerce have created enormous opportunities and enormous anxieties for Americans. In the last three years, we have seen seven million new jobs, more millionaires and new businesses than ever before, high corporate profits, and a booming stock market. Yet, most Americans are working harder for the same or lower pay. And they feel more insecurity about their jobs, their retirement, their health care, and their children's education. Too many of our children are clearly exposed to poverty and welfare, violence and drugs.

These are the great challenges for our whole country on the homefront at the dawn of the 21st century. We've got to find the wisdom and the will to create family-wage jobs for all the people who want to work; to open the door of college to all Americans; to strengthen families and reduce the awful problems to which our children are exposed; to move poor Americans from welfare to work.

This is the work of our administration -- to give the people the tools they need to make the most of their own lives, to give families and communities the tools they need to solve their own problems.

If properly done, affirmative action can help us come together, go forward and grow together. It is in our moral, legal and practical interest to see that every person can make the most of his life. In the fight for the future, we need all hands on deck and some of those hands still need a helping hand.

In our national community we're all different, we're all the same. We want liberty and freedom. We want the embrace of family and community. We want to make the most of our own lives and we're determined to give our children a better one. Today there are voices of division who would say forget all that. Don't you dare. Remember we're still closing the gap between our founders ideals and our reality. But every step along the way has made us richer, stronger and better. And the best is yet to come.

act
Gene W.
only if
problems

THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

John
just wanted
"red flag" if
proclamation
is off

FAX COVER SHEET

OFFICE OF THE ASSISTANT TO THE PRESIDENT FOR DOMESTIC POLICY
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THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

April 16, 1996

MEMORANDUM FOR:

FIRST LADY'S STAFF (MELANNE VERVEER)
TODD STERN (PHIL CAPLAN)
JACK QUINN (KATHLEEN WALLMAN)
KITTY HIGGINS
JOHN HILLEY
✓ CAROL RASCO
DOUG SOSNIK
ALEXIS HERMAN
JODIE TORKELSON
ANNE WALLEY/STEPHANIE STREETT - FYI

FROM:

Lana Dickey/Julia Bator
for JIM DORSKIND

SUBJECT:

(Draft Proclamation)
Jewish Heritage Week, 1996

Attached for your review is the above-mentioned proclamation designating April 21-28, 1996, as "Jewish Heritage Week."

It was drafted and edited/revised by the Presidential Letters and Messages Office.

IMMEDIATE ATTENTION REQUIRED. Written or oral response required by no later than 5:00 p.m., Wednesday, April 17, 1996. IF WE HAVE NOT HEARD FROM YOU BY 5:00 P.M., WE WILL ASSUME THAT THE DRAFT IS ACCEPTABLE TO YOU.

For questions, discussion, or routine clearance, contact Lana Dickey, extension 67487, or Julia Bator, extension 65518, via phone or interoffice mail, in room 91. Thank you.

cc: Tim Saunders

JEWISH HERITAGE WEEK, 1996

BY THE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

A PROCLAMATION

Joining citizens from every race, ethnicity, and belief, millions of Jewish people have made their home in America. The Jewish culture has thrived and benefited our society in countless different ways, and some of our most distinguished leaders in business, academia, the arts, and government proudly trace their ancestry to this rich and ancient faith.

In many ways, the Jewish experience is unique -- perhaps no other people on earth have so frequently experienced the painful truth that the path to triumph must often pass through tragedy. Time and time again, the Jewish people have overcome oppressors and destroyers, always reaffirming that the basic human values of faith, community, justice, and charity can prevail, even in the bleakest moments.

In America, a country founded on the principles of tolerance and equality, Judaism has taken root and flourished, enriching every aspect of our national life. We will be forever grateful for the remarkable contributions of our Jewish citizens, and it is fitting that we set aside a week each year to give thanks for their inestimable gifts and to honor the traditions of their remarkable religion and heritage.

NOW, THEREFORE, I, WILLIAM J. CLINTON, President of the United States of America, by virtue of the authority vested in me by the Constitution and laws of the United States, do hereby proclaim April 21 through April 28, 1996, as Jewish Heritage Week. I call upon the people of the United States to observe this week with appropriate programs, ceremonies, and activities.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand this

day of _____, in the year of our Lord nineteen hundred and ninety-six, and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and twentieth.

THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

November 8, 1994

Ms. Karen K. Narasaki
Japanese American Citizens League
Suite 704
1001 Connecticut Avenue, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20036

Dear Ms. Narasaki:

Thank you for your interest in having President Clinton attend the swearing-in ceremony for Gilbert Casellas, Paul Igasaki, and Paul Miller. President Clinton appreciates your kind letter and is sorry he will be unable to accommodate your request.

Unfortunately, the tremendous demands on the President as he works to move our country forward do not give him the opportunity to accept as many offers as he would like.

On behalf of the President, thank you again for taking the time to write. Your continued interest and support are deeply appreciated.

Sincerely,


William M. Webster, IV
Director of Scheduling and Advance

WMW/ing